

Third year sees blossoming of Aegean Festival

Artistic director Peter Tiboris praises Syros event

Rising above the role of a typical summer tourist destination, the town of Ermoupolis on Syros is emerging as a cultural capital, with a history dating back to the founding of modern Greece. This is the third year the Festival of the Aegean is being held on the Cycladic island, but this year's event boasts a longer run and more varied and international productions than ever before.

Peter Tiboris, general director and artistic director of the Aegean Festival, remarked at a press conference yesterday that the "festival has grown from being a child to a young adult." A third-generation Greek American, the acclaimed conductor and head of MidAmerica Productions also admitted that Syros is "an extraordinary place,"

having become in a few years' time his "second musical home." He admitted from the outset that "the basic premise of the festival is high artistic merit" rather than a showcase of a particular musical genre. A narrow musical focus is certainly not the case with the Aegean Festival, as its performances range from opera to rebetika.

The festival begins on Wednesday with works by Verdi and Beethoven performed by the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic and soprano Irii Tsirakidis. Following on Thursday, Friday and Sunday are three performances of Pietro Mascagni's opera "Zanetto," never before performed in Greece. The director of the production, Carol Costello, spoke of the unusual, "conversational" tone of Mascagni's work and praised

the advantages of having "a multicultural crew of world-class singers" producing "an exciting combination of energies, particularly in such a beautiful place as Syros." On Saturday, Vienna comes to Syros with works by Strauss, Lehar, Stolz and Kalman. Recitals for voice and piano follow on July 17.

Music gives way to theater on July 18 and 19 with an English-language production of "Romeo and Juliet," presented with Greek supertitles. Shakespeare's classic is performed by the Aquila Theatre Company, the permanent company-in-residence at the Center for Ancient Studies at New York University, known for its productions of classical drama, and directed by the troupe's founder Peter Meineck. This is their first time performing in Greece, just a



The Festival of the Aegean's artistic director, acclaimed conductor Peter Tiboris, will lead the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic in the opening concert.

few days before they take part in the Edinburgh Festival.

Jazz is next on the agenda, with two important home-grown acts making an appearance: the Stratos Vougas Quartet on July 20 and Human Touch, with David Lynch, Yiotis Kiourtsoglou and Stavros Landsias, well known to the Greek public, playing on July 22. On July 21, however, jazz takes a break and rebetika — from Sweden no less — is performed in the central Miaouli Square. A repertoire of traditional Asia Minor songs and rebetika will

be played by the Taximi band, made up of members of the Greek diaspora community in the Nordic country.

Ermoupolis's Apollon Theater, where most of the events take place, has a rich artistic history of its own. Thought by many to be the most beautiful opera house in Greece, it was constructed in the 19th century and called "La Piccola Scala," as it was built along the lines of Milan's famed La Scala. The Apollon's maiden performance was Verdi's "Rigoletto." It is only fitting then that this year's festival is inaugurated with

the overture to Verdi's "La forza del destino," paying tribute to the host island's cultural legacy.

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The festival runs from Wednesday to July 22. Tickets are on sale at Ianos Bookstore in Athens (210.321.7917) and the Apollon Theater on Syros (22810.851.92 & 6932.483.079). Tickets cost 15 euros; concession price tickets for students and children tickets cost 10 euros. Performances start at 9 p.m. For more information, visit www.festivaloftheaegean.com